

HELP!

GOD'S HOPE FOR THE HURTING

Addicted

INTRODUCTION

Galatians 5:1

This is our world:

- Almost 21 million Americans have at least one addiction, yet only 10% of them receive treatment.
- Drug overdose deaths have more than tripled since 1990.
- From 1999 to 2017, more than 700,000 Americans died from overdosing on a drug.
- Alcohol and drug addiction cost the U.S. economy over \$600 billion every year.
- Every year, worldwide, alcohol is the cause of 5.3% of deaths (or 1 in every 20).
- About 300 million people throughout the world have an alcohol use disorder.
- On average, 30 Americans die every day in an alcohol-related car accident, and six Americans die every day from alcohol poisoning.
- About 88,000 people die as a result of alcohol every year in the United States.
- About 130 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose.
- From 1999 to 2017, 399,230 Americans lost their lives to opioids.
- In 2017 alone, 47,600 fatal overdoses occurred in America which involved at least one opioid.
- In 2017, doctors issued 191,218,272 opioid prescriptions, a slight decline from the 200,000,000 opioid prescriptions which they issued every year from 2006 to 2016.
- About 20% to 30% of people who take prescription opioids misuse them.¹
- In 2006, estimated revenues for sex-related entertainment businesses were just under \$13 billion in the US. These estimates included video sales and rentals, Internet sales, cable, pay-per-view, phone sex, exotic dance clubs magazines, and novelty stores.
- 28,258 users are watching pornography every second.
- \$3,075.64 is spent on porn every second on the Internet.
- 90% of teens and 96% of young adults are either encouraging, accepting, or neutral when they talk about porn with their friends.
- 1 in 5 mobile searches are for pornography.
- 57% of teens search out porn at least monthly.²

¹ <https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/addiction-statistics/>

² <https://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>

OPEN IT

1. The above statistics are concerning the addiction to drugs, alcohol, and pornography. What other substances or activities do people become addicted to? What addictions are socially acceptable, and which are not?

READ IT

Galatians 5:1

APPLY IT

The means by which the Gentile Galatians have become free from the Old Covenant laws was through Christ. Although they had been set free, there were certain people arguing that believing in Christ was not enough - they had to follow the rules and regulations of the Old Covenant. Specifically, Gentile Christians had to be circumcised. This is what Paul was writing about to this church.

*Paul declares that the purpose of Christ's work was for freedom. The concept of **freedom**, which is a basic theme of Galatians, is connected throughout Paul's letters primarily with freedom from: the law (Rom. 7:3,4), from sin (Rom. 6:18-22), or from death (Rom. 8:2). Freedom is also equated with the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17) and is used as a way to describe the Christian life (Gal. 2:4). In an expansive command, Paul directs his readers to **stand firm** against the influence of the rival evangelists. Underscoring the point he has made repeatedly, Paul charges his converts not to put themselves in a position of submitting to a **yoke of slavery**.³*

2. Some addictions are to substances or activities that in and of themselves are not sinful or bad for you. For example, let's look at coffee and exercise. Health experts tell us that both of these things are actually good for you. Could these good gifts from God potentially enslave a person? How?

³ L. Ann Jervis, Galatians: New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), p. 126,127.

Addiction can be compared to the Angler fish. (Stay with me!) When a much smaller male Angler fish mates with the larger female, he actually attaches himself to her. After a while they begin to grow together, with the male fish dissolving into the female. Talk about two becoming one! They share blood vessels, skin, nutrients, and other vital parts as this process many times lasts for their lifetime.⁴

This is what happens to a person who is overcome by a substance or activity. Take for instance someone who is a pathological liar - they are addicted to telling lies. This becomes their language. They cannot go for a day without presenting falsehoods in their conversations. The sin has become a part of them. It's hard for them to even remember what it was like to tell the truth.

Or how about the 30 year old woman who is addicted to pornography. It has become part of her daily routine. She looks at things and lusts after situations that would have appalled her ten years prior. Why is she so used to her sin? Because it has become part of her.

6. Read Romans 7:15-25. Do you think the Apostle Paul is speaking about the struggles he had before being saved by Christ or is he describing the Christian life? Does this describe your Christian life?

7. How should a Christian feel about sin in their life? Are there any sins in your life that you have grown comfortable committing?

⁴ <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/57800/horrors-anglerfish-mating>

Being a Christian isn't easy. Don't listen to the prosperity preacher that says everything will be unicorns and rainbows if you follow Christ and give to his ministry. Jesus did the hard work that we could never do on Calvary's cross, and then He rose from the dead! But after we are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ the hard work of sanctification begins.

8. Read Romans 8:1-11. In our walk with God and in our battle against the slavery of sin how important is it to remember Romans 8:1? Does this verse motivate you to fight harder against sin in your life, or does it give you an excuse not to take sin very seriously?

9. While non-Christians certainly can discipline themselves to avoid and conquer addiction, the Christian is the only one who can be truly freed from the flesh. Those who are unsaved live their lives thinking about "the things of the flesh." Christians are called to live thinking about "the things of the Spirit." How does an addicted person think irrationally about their sin?

10. What is promised to people who set their minds on things of the Spirit? What practical ways can you discipline yourself to think about the things of the Spirit more than the things of the flesh?

One of the things that makes dealing with addiction so challenging is the shame that is associated with certain sins that enslave us. We *want* to have our lives put together and in order - at least we want people to *think* that we are successful and that our lives are fantastic and that we don't have any struggles!

So we think thoughts like...

"What will people think of me if they find out about this sin?"

"People won't respect me anymore if they knew I struggled with this!"

"I shouldn't be having this problem at my age."

"How can I call myself a Christian?"

"Nobody else struggles the way I do with this sin."

And we stay quiet, and the sin is kept hidden...

The Scriptures tell us to confess our sins to the Lord (1 John 1:9), which is a central element in the war against sinful addiction. But all too often we neglect the second encouragement to confess our sins, which is to confess our sins to one another. We read in James 5:16 that we are to confess our sins to one another and to pray for each other. The Church should be a place where people are free and feel safe to confess their sins and to openly and honestly pursue purity. When we hide our sin (and we never hide it as well as we think), we give Satan the power to hold it over our heads and do what he does best - be the Accuser.

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

(1 John 1:5-9)

11. How important is it to have accountability partners; that is, trusted Christian friends that you can share your struggles with? How can our church help foster these types of relationships?

12. If you are struggling with a secret addiction in your life, write it down below along with a prayer to ask God for His help in overcoming it. Also, write down one fellow believer you would feel comfortable talking to about this struggle.